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Reagan Plans Easing Cuts in Aid to Arts

By IRVIN MOLOTSKY

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Jan. 31 — In a gesture that proponents of Federal aid to the arts found encouraging, President Reagan proposed today in his 1984 budget more funds for the National Endowments for the Arts and the Humanities than he had sought in either of his first two years in office.

In both cases, however, Mr. Reagan today asked for less than what Congress appropriated last year, and it seemed very likely that Congress would once again provide more money than the President wants.

The 1984 funds sought by Mr. Reagan were \$125 million for the National Endowment for the Arts and \$112 million for the National Endowment for the Humanities.

By comparison, Mr. Reagan last year requested \$101 million for the arts endowment (only to see Congress approve \$144 million) and he asked for \$96 million for the humanities endowment (with Congress approving \$130 million).

Aid Given Through Grants

Thus, members of Congress said, the President is still seeking reductions from what the arts and humanities endowments have received from the Federal Government since 1979, but the cuts are not as sharp as those he has sought in the past.

The endowments use their funds to encourage the arts and humanities, partly through outright grants to individuals, organizations and state agencies, and partly through grants that require the recipients to raise matching donations. More than 90 percent of the arts-endowment funds, for example, must be matched on a 1-to-1 basis, but some of the funds must be matched on a 3-to-1 level.

Mr. Bennett noted that the matching requirement generated \$62 million in non-Federal gifts to humanities programs in 1982.

Of today's proposal, Representative Sidney R. Yates, the Chicago Democrat who is chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on the Interior, said, "It's a very good thing — they've reversed their position." Mr. Yates



The New York Times

Representative Sidney R. Yates

has used his position to put back into the endowments the funds that the Administration has sought to cut out.

"They are moving toward a more significant budget," he said. "They've been brought kicking and screaming to it."

The Administration's latest request is "a long way from the \$77 million they asked for in 1981" for the arts endowment, Mr. Yates said, but he added, "It is still not enough to meet the needs of the arts community."

Representative Yates said that he and his committee would once again press Congress to provide more funds than the Administration wants.

"We will hold hearings to see what the proper figure ought to be," Mr. Yates said. "Last year's was a minimum figure, and the needs are being increased."

While plans to increase the 1984 spending levels were made by Mr. Yates and others in Congress, including Representative Thomas J. Downey, the chairman of the Congressional Arts Caucus, the Administration officials concerned with the endowments defended the budget proposal.

Budget Money for Arts and Humanities

Appropriations for the last ten fiscal years, in millions of dollars

	Arts	Humanities
1973	\$ 41	\$ 41
1974	64	54
1975	80	79
1976	88	85
1977	100	99
1978	124	121
1979	149	145
1980	154	150
1981	158	151
1982	143	131

Source: National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities

Frank Hodsoll, the chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, said: "The goal of President Reagan's overall budget is economic growth and deficit reduction. An improved economy will benefit the arts, along with other sectors of our society."

'Prudent, Fiscally Responsible'

Mr. Hodsoll noted that the current request represented an increase over last year's request, although he did not add that it would represent a reduction from funds actually appropriated. He asserted that the arts would prosper in the United States through the support of the private sector, which he called "our senior partner."

William J. Bennett, chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, said, "This budget request is a prudent and fiscally responsible approach to providing support for exemplary work in the humanities in the various areas prescribed in our legislation."

He added: "It is essential to support a broad range of projects, as well as to foster excellence in humanities activities at all levels. This budget will do that job."

Since they were begun with startup funds of \$2.5 million each in 1968, there has been an increase in financing for the endowments that was interrupted only once, as shown by the actual appropriations for the last 10 years.

Representative Downey, a New York Democrat, said that Washington ought to be increasing its financial support of the arts instead of reducing it.

"When the Federal Government reduces its share of the burden, private groups don't do more," Mr. Downey said, "they do less."

State Cutting Arts Support

A proposed cut of 13.8 percent for the New York State Council on the Arts — which helps to support 1,200 organizations ranging from the Metropolitan Opera in New York City to local historical societies in small upstate counties — will reduce its funds from \$32.5 million to \$28 million for the 1983-84 fiscal year, according to the executive budget that Governor Cuomo is submitting to the State Legislature today.

In responding to the proposed \$4.5 million reduction, Kitty Carlisle Hart, chairman of the council, said: "The State of New York is facing a fiscal crisis of unprecedented proportions. As an agency of state government, the council acknowledges its share of its responsibilities. Obviously, we do so with profound regret. However, by their very nature the arts always have been and always will be resilient. Our council and staff will find creative solutions facing both our agency and our constituency during these extremely troubled times."

There will not be across-the-board cuts for all institutions, large or small, and new applications for aid will still be considered, according to Joseph Wells, a spokesman for the council. He added that the council's staff of 95 would be cut by 5 this year and 2 next year.

The budget for the council remained constant during the last two years, under Gov. Hugh Carey. In 1975-76, the council received its highest amount: \$34,150,000.